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NOTES ON THE USE OF THE HEBREW TENSES.

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The work upon which these notes are based originated in a sense of dissatisfaction with the treatment of the subject in some of the best known elementary grammars, e. g., Davidson's Grammar¹ and Müller's Syntax. One would have been quite prepared to have found the treatment of so difficult a subject incomplete in parts and to have found points left uncertain. But statements as to the tenses have an air of completeness and symmetry and certainty which raises high expectations, and it seemed to me that these expectations were not realized and that the enquiring student does not derive from such works so much help towards comprehension as he might expect. I found also that these impressions were shared by others.

Probably the form in which ideas about Hebrew tenses first shape themselves in the student's brain is that, where possible, a Perfect is translated as a past tense and an Imperfect as a future, and that, if such translations are impossible, considerable latitude is allowed in translation and the best must be made of the verb in the interests of the sense. It is felt, however, that this theory of the tenses can be only temporary and the student turns to statements of the syntax of the verb in the hope of attaining a better and more permanent theory.

He finds a statement of this syntax which might be briefly represented by the following complete and symmetrical table:

Perfect = Imperfect with Waw Cons.		Imperfect = Perfect with Waw Cons.	
<i>Past</i>	I did	I was doing	
	I have done	I used to do	
	I had done		
<i>Present</i>	I do	I do	
<i>Future</i>	I shall have done	I shall do	

¹ This statement must not be understood as implying any want of appreciation of Davidson's Grammar as a whole. But having as a teacher some little experience of its use as a text-book, I have become more and more convinced that it must be the author's intention that it should be explained, supplemented or qualified by oral teaching; so that probably many of the criticisms in these notes would be obviated when the book is used by Prof. Davidson himself.

There is an air of mathematical accuracy about a statement of this kind. It suggests that, given your tense, the statement of the syntax thereof is a kind of function of the tense which can be obtained by a known process of expansion. Perhaps, however, an air of mathematical accuracy is a little suspicious in syntax. The student wishes to understand the principles that determine the occurrence and distribution of the several tenses, and to know why in any given case a particular Hebrew Imperfect is to be translated by one rather than another of its possible English equivalents. He feels that his first impression from the syntax is that there is still left a free choice without any special preference for past or future, or possibly any special attention to the sense. If his faith in the possibility of Hebrew syntax is not destroyed he is apt to feel dissatisfied with the present method of its exposition. These statements of syntax suggest a neat key of convenient size which can be inserted in a lock and turns right round in the lock, but unfortunately does not turn the lock.

It may, of course, be suggested that these impressions are due to the elementary state of the student's knowledge, but as elementary works are presumably written for elementary students, they ought to add to his comprehension of the subject even when his knowledge is in an elementary stage.

Moreover, it is still the case that the old theory of the tenses is maintained and taught, and that there are students whose first introduction to the subject has been through such teaching. These students, when told that their original teaching is not orthodox, would gladly find in the hand-books of the new school some statement of the difference between the two theories and especially of the practical result of the change of the theory on interpretation and translation. This statement seems as a rule not to be forthcoming. It stands to reason that a total change of theory is likely to affect translation, and if left without exact information the convert from the old theory to the new is apt to imagine almost all translation affected. If his reading is confined to historical portions and he finds that the translations suggested by his old theory still very largely hold good, he may become a little sceptical as to the importance of holding a correct theory. If the students of an ancient system of astronomy had been in the habit of calculating the date of eclipses under their ancient theory, conversion to the Copernican system might seem to them to involve the discarding of these dates; and if without previous explanation they were allowed to discover that after all the eclipses occurred on the dates calculated on the old theory, their views as to the relative merits of the two systems might again become unsettled.

There are other points, too, on which the student might reasonably look for clear statement, even if it were only of the fact that grammarians (if such be the case) have not yet completely mastered the subject. It is obvious at a very elementary stage that the conditions and methods of use of the tenses in poetical sections are very different from those in narrative sections; but beyond fragmen-

tary notices in the symmetrical expansion already referred to there is no plain statement of the main differences of poetic and prosaic style.

Again, we learn our Hebrew too much at second hand through German and, naturally, translations of a German syntax. Grammars that reproduce the phrases of Ewald are apt to forget to connect the usage of the Hebrew tenses with those of the English tenses.

As the standard text-books are supposed to state the current views clearly and concisely for the benefit of the student, it seemed that the next step might be to attempt to apply the results as given in these books to the reading of some considerable portions of the Old Testament, rather than to seek the further and more detailed exposition of them in larger grammars.

I was specially interested in trying to observe the amount of practical change involved in the substitution of the ideas of Perfect and Imperfect for those of Past and Future; it seemed simpler to begin with narrative portions of the Old Testament, and the Pentateuch together with Joshua seemed to present a fairly convenient whole.

Accordingly I read these books specially attending to the use of the Perfect and Imperfect tenses, and noting each occurrence of these tenses in a table of twelve columns arranged thus:

Perfect

1. Cases where the Hebrew Perfect may be translated as a Past Tense without any difficulty as regards context.
2. Cases where such a translation is difficult.
3. Cases where such a translation seems rendered impossible by the context.

Imperfect with Waw Cons.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 4. | } | As in case of Perfect, substituting "Imperfect with Waw Cons." for "Perfect." |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |

Imperfect.

7. Cases where the Hebrew Imperfect may be translated by an English Future, Present, or Subjunctive, or by *may*, *can*, etc.
8. Cases where the Imperfect has a frequentative sense.
9. Cases where it seems necessary to translate the Imperfect by the English Past Imperfect or other past tense.

Perfect with Waw Cons.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 10. | } | As in case of Imperfect, substituting "Perfect with Waw Cons." for "Imperfect" |
| 11. | | |
| 12. | | |

It will be seen that the second and third columns under each tense will contain the cases which seem specially to strain the "Past and Future" theory and which seem to be more manageable under the "Perfect and Imperfect" theory.

They may be stated as those in which on the one hand a Perfect or Imperfect with Waw Cons. has to be translated as a Future, and on the other an Imperfect or Perfect with Waw Cons. as a Past. The use of either tense as present, and the Subjunctive, Potential Imperative and Optative uses of the Imperfect seem to give no special difficulty under either theory.

Before giving the results of this work, it may be as well to point out that it is not intended to imply that the results are due to careful and thorough consideration of difficult cases; these are simply noted as difficult. Moreover, many cases are put in the first column under each tense, which might possibly be assigned to the second. In this arrangement I have been guided by the possibilities of translation into English Pasts and Futures or allied tenses, and I have also followed recognized translations. However, something more will be said on this point below.¹

The results were as follows :

<i>Perfect</i>	1	2	3
	2827	5	1
<i>Imperfect with Waw Cons.</i>	4	5	6
	4829	2	—
<i>Imperfect</i>	7	8	9
	4116	51	33
<i>Perfect with Waw Cons.</i>	10	11	12
	2584	46	22

Neglecting for the present the extremely small number of instances in 2, 3, 5 and 6, we see that we may state the following approximate rules :

1. That the Perfect, or Imperfect with Waw Cons., may be translated as the English Perfect or Pluperfect.
2. That the Imperfect, or Perfect with Waw Cons., is only rarely used of the past.
3. That the Imperfect, or Perfect with Waw Cons., occurs very occasionally in a frequentative sense of past time.

It may also be noticed that 1, 4, 7, 10 contain the cases where translation is not affected by change of theory; and that the matter affording the chief ground for debate and some of the data for argument are comprised in the other columns; and that the debatable matter is extremely small in proportion.

It will be seen from the table and rule 1, that the cases where the Perfect,

¹ It will be obvious that to be perfectly sure that no errors from inadvertence have crept in would require much time, more time than I have had at my disposal. But this is perhaps less important than it would be in some other cases, as the proportion between the numbers in columns 1, 4, 7, 10 and those in the other columns is too great to be affected by mere inadvertencies.

etc., are used for prophetic perfect, strong affirmation, and where in English we use a present which implies a perfect, are included by a certain elasticity of interpretation in rule 1. The defence of this position is reserved for a section on the use of the English tenses as illustrating that of the Hebrew tenses.

If the cases mentioned in the last paragraph were separated from those in which the Perfect and the Imperfect with Waw Cons. are used as simple past tenses, it would be found that the former are few in comparison with the latter and that for the great bulk of occurrences of these forms the following rules might be laid down :

1. That in narrative the Perfect is used as the ordinary narrative tense when the verb is not immediately preceded by a Waw, i. e.,

a. In Oratio Recta.

b. In dependent, interrogative and negative sentences.

c. In cases where some emphatic word (or words) is placed before the verb.

It is, of course, to be understood that "narrative tense" is confined here to past tense used in narrative.

2. That in narrative the Imperfect with Waw Cons. is used as the ordinary narrative tense in independent sentences except in interrogative and negative sentences and where other words are placed before the verb for the sake of emphasis.

One or two limitations of the latter rule will be noticed further on. It is only attempted here to give such rough statements of usage of the tenses as might fairly be submitted to students with the caution that they might have to be somewhat modified.

The uses of the Imperfect and its allied Perfect with Waw do not readily lend themselves to wide and simple generalizations.

It now remains to notice briefly the cases not included in our rules, namely, those in 2, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 12.

2, 3. Gen. XVIII., 12 **הִיתָה־לִּי עֲרָנָה**. Both AV. and RV. translate as future, which is doubtless the most idiomatic English equivalent of the Hebrew ; but might not the literal meaning of the root and force of the tense be fairly represented by "Has pleasure come to me?"

Gen. XL., 14 **כִּי אִם זָכַרְתִּנִּי**. Driver, p. 169 n., and Ewald as quoted by him, both treat this case as exceptional and reject the translation as imperative given by AV. and RV.

Exod. IX., 15 **כִּי עָתָה שְׁלַחְתִּי**. The RV. changes the future of the AV. into a past conditional, which removes all difficulty as to use of tense and context.

Exod. XXI., 37 **וּטָבְחוֹ אוֹ מְכָרוֹ**, XXII., 9 **וְנִשְׁבָּה אוֹ נִשְׁבֵּר אוֹ מָת**, XXII., 13 **וְנִשְׁבֵּר אוֹ מָת**. It might indeed be possible to translate the Perfects without Waw strictly, e. g., "and shall slay it or have sold it," but such a trans-

lation seems very awkward. Might not, however, the **י** connect the latter verb with the former so closely as to bring the latter so to speak under the vinculum of the Waw?

5. These two cases are Imperfects with Waw, co-ordinate with the Perfect in Exod. ix., 15, already referred to, and may be similarly explained.

Thus the only case that presents any serious difficulty so far is that in Gen. xL., 14, and the amount of exception to the rule 1 on p. 196 is very slight indeed.

It will also be seen that of the cases included under 9 and 12 many might fairly be taken as frequentative.

9. In the first place, 24 out of the 33 occur in poetical sections, Exod. xv.; Deut. xxxii.; Exod. xxxiii., 8, 9. Two are frequentative, Exod. xxxvi., 29, Gen. vi., 4 (so Driver). One, Deut. xxxiii., 3, may without any great difficulty be taken as a future. There remain six cases which cannot be explained satisfactorily unless as referring to past time, and not frequentative; four of these, Gen. xxxvii., 7; Exod. viii., 20; Num. xxiii., 7; Deut. ii., 12, are taken by Driver as analogous to our Historical Present; and the other two, Gen. ii., 25 and xlviii., 10, are left as unsolved problems.

12. Of these 22, 12 might be taken as frequentative: Five, Gen. xxxi., 7; xxxvii., 3; Josh. vi., 8, 13; Exod. xxxvi., 29, are referred to by Driver as frequentative; five others, Exod. xxxvi., 30, 38; xxxviii., 28; xxxix., 3, are in a similar context to Exod. xxxvi., 29. The other two are Gen. xxi., 25; xlix., 23. One, Num. xxi., 15, might fairly be taken as a future;¹ one, Deut. xxxiii., 2, is in a poetical section. There remain *eight* which do not seem to yield to any satisfactory explanation, except as referring to past time and that not in a frequentative sense; one of these, Gen. xv., 6, Driver speaks of as an "isolated irregularity;" the others are, Gen. xxviii., 6;² xxxiv., 5; xxxviii., 5; xxxviii., 9 (two cases); Josh. ix., 12;¹ xxii., 4. One is naturally tempted to consider these as cases of the Perfect with weak Waw, and some of them are so taken by Driver. But perhaps it might be preferable to leave these eight cases all of them an "insoluble enigma," for the following reasons:

a. Because we have seen that similar cases occur in the Imperfect where we cannot resort to any change of force of the Waw.

b. Because these cases are so "exceedingly rare" in historical sections of the earlier books.

c. Because the change from the obsolete construction with Waw Cons. to the current construction with weak Waw was a species of error in the copying

¹ This list of eight would, according to Driver, have to be extended to fifteen. It is beyond the scope of these notes to enter minutely into individual cases; most of Driver's cases are included in those which seem to need translating by the Past Imperfect; and in the further analysis of this class I only attempt to show that in some cases there are plausible grounds for setting aside this seeming necessity. (Cf. Driver, p. 187).

² Cf. preceding foot-note and Driver, p. 189.

that scribes would be peculiarly liable to, and these cases may be cases of corrupt text.

Thus we see that out of nearly 7000 cases, rules 1-3 on p. 196 cover all but about 14. Hence we maintain that as far as the historical sections of the Hexateuch are concerned, it is misleading to co-ordinate the use of the Imperfect in the Past with its Present, Future and Subjunctive and kindred uses. Yet it is so co-ordinated in Davidson and Müller, and the student is left to gather from incidental remarks that even the frequentative use is comparatively rare and that in historical sections any other use of the Imperfect of past time is most exceptional. Surely, therefore, rule 2 on p. 196 would better help the student to a clear understanding of the usage; while the exceptional cases might be referred to or even enumerated in a note.

THE SEQUENCE OF THE TENSES.

The rules given on page 197 are not only empirical in form rather than scientific, but they omit and ignore the usual statement that the Imperfect with Waw Cons. depends on an initial Perfect. Now I do not in any way deny or even criticize the orthodox theory that the use of the Imperfect with Waw Cons. originated in such a construction, nor, of course, do I deny that a Perfect followed by Imperfects with Waw is a common construction. But I maintain that the usual statements on the subject are misleading, inaccurate and sometimes a trifle absurd. It would, of course, be utterly unreasonable to ascribe these characteristics to any want of knowledge or appreciation of the language on the part of the writers; it seems merely to be due to an enthusiasm of the scientific statement and elaboration of theory to which a clear statement of the actual usage of the tenses is altogether subordinated.

The following are some of the statements referred to:

1. Bickell's Outlines of Hebrew Grammar, § 152 Curtiss' translation: "If a narrative begins with the Perfect, it is continued in the apocopated form of the future with *va*."

This is the only reference in a very brief outline of syntax as to the use of the "future with *va*." Standing by itself it would certainly convey to the reader the idea that the "future with *va*" never occurred except under these conditions; or at any rate that this use of it was much more common than any other.

2. Davidson's Grammar, pp. 60, 61: "After a simple *perfect* events conceived as following upon this Perfect are expressed by the emphatic Vav joined with the *imperfect*."

This is given conspicuously in the largest type used in the book as "*the usage*;" at the bottom of the next page in a note dealing with two other points and printed in the smallest type used in the book, we read:

"The conversive tenses are properly used after simple tenses, but the usage has pervaded the language to such an extent that they may be employed when no

simple tense actually precedes; and in translating into Hebrew *and* with a verb may generally be expressed by the conversive tense."

The impression obviously conveyed by words, position and type is that the construction spoken of as "*the usage*" is by far the most common, and that the construction which "*may be*" employed is infrequent, if not exceptional.

3. Müller's Syntax, Robertson's translation, pp. 13, 14: "The Imperfect with ׀ appears in its use as quite equivalent to the simple Perfect; and indeed even stands instead of it in all places where a discourse begun with the simple Perfect is carried on uninterruptedly in the context; it can, moreover, be used in continuation of other verbal forms instead of a simple Perfect wherever the latter would be admissible.

"Rem. a. As soon as a new order of thought begins, which is not to be taken as closely connected with what precedes, the Perfect is necessary."

This statement leaves us with more latitude; we should still suppose that the construction of Imperfect with Waw was usual and most frequent, but that it sometimes occurred after other verbal forms.

Later on this is modified in a guarded and limited fashion, but we are left to suppose that the use "with any word whatever" is entirely subordinate.

The lessons which the student would suppose intended to be taught by the above statements would be:

1. That the Imperfect with Waw is most commonly found after a simple Perfect; less frequently after other verbal forms and occasionally after "any word whatever."

[Müller indeed states that the latter construction or rather a large group of constructions of which this is one, is found "very often." But in a syntax "very often" at the head of a subordinate paragraph after the broad and general statement at the beginning of the quotation would only be understood to mean that the construction occurred often enough to be considered regular and not exceptional; apart from such a context we should use "occasionally" for what would here be understood by "very often."]

2. That the Perfect is commonly found as the first verb of a paragraph and that the Imperfect with Waw is never found.

While the mode in which the construction of the Perfect and of the Imperfect with Waw is stated in Bickell and Davidson would suggest some such conclusion, Müller's statement that at the beginning of a new order of thought not closely connected with what precedes a Perfect is *necessary*, almost shuts the student up to such a conclusion. In fact the tendency of the student, accustomed in other languages to a syntax that deals chiefly with sentences, is to apply these statements to sentences. He has visions of a series of Hebrew sentences, each beginning with a Perfect and containing one or more Imperfects with Waw Cons. Müller's

“Remark” may suggest to him that sentences are often closely connected with each other and do not always begin a new order of thought; but he probably supposes that a new order of thought may be understood to begin with a new paragraph, a new chapter, when chapters are at all reasonably divided. One might suppose, for instance, that a new order of thought began at Gen. xxxviii., 1, where the story of Tamar interrupts the history of Joseph.

These then are the ideas that the student would derive from such works on Hebrew syntax as to the distribution of the Perfect and Imperfect with Waw Cons., and their relation to one another. The impression given by the actual reading of the Hexateuch is entirely different. Instead of a series of sentences, each beginning with a Perfect, he finds that the main verbs of the independent sentences are almost always Imperfects with Waw Cons. and that the occurrence of a Perfect in such a capacity is rare, the Perfects are mostly found in dependent sentences and oratio recta.

These Perfects being rare, it follows that the construction Perfect followed by Imperfect with Waw Cons. is also comparatively rare. Taking a few chapters or sections in which Perfects and Imperfects with Waw Cons. occur pretty freely we get such results as the following:

Gen. v.—vi., 8 סִפֵּר תּוֹלְדֵת אָדָם. The construction occurs once, after the בָּרָא of verse 2, the main verbs are Imperfects with Waw Cons. for *thirty-eight* verses.

The הָיָה of vi., 4 is parenthetic and the יָרָא of verse 5 takes up the narrative from vi., 3.

Gen. x.—xi., 9. In verse 1, יוֹלְדוּ following the bare names Shem, Ham and Japhet; then in verses 8 and 9 a series of three Perfects and then an Imperfect with Waw Cons. Though the section is rich in Perfects the construction in question is only found again in verses 11, 19 (though it seems strained to connect וַיְהִי with either of the two preceding Perfects, 29; xi., 1, whence the series of Waw Cons. continues for eight verses, the הָיָה in verse 3 is parenthetic.

Similarly in Exod. i. and ii., out of forty-seven verses this construction is found in *five* cases, i., 6, 7, 17; ii., 3, 19; in two of these, i., 17 and ii., 3, the use of the Imperfect is rendered impossible by the presence of לֹא and another, ii., 19, is in the oratio recta.

In Lev. ix., out of 24 verses this construction is found in verses 1, 11, 13, 21.

In Num. xvii., out of 28 verses this construction is found in verses 7, 12 and 23, in each case in a parenthesis, the main line of narrative consisting of a series of Imperfects with Waw Cons., and if we look for an initial Perfect, we have to go back to the preceding chapter.

Deut. xxxiv. Out of twelve verses the construction occurs *once* in verses 7, 8, and even there וַיִּכְנֹחַ does not seem to connect with the previous Perfects.

Josh. ix. Out of twenty-seven verses the construction occurs in verses 3, 14, 18, 24, 27; in 18 the presence of the Perfect is due to the נָשָׂא , and in 14 and 27 the sequence seems doubtful.

It follows from examples like these that the cases in which the Imperfect with Waw Cons. occurs within reach, i. e., within two or three verbs of a simple Perfect, are rare. To use symbols, let P denote a simple Perfect, I an Imperfect with Waw Cons., then the combinations P+I, P+2I, P+3I, occur but rarely; when the Imperfects are traceable to any Perfect we find series of the type P+nI where n is large, and consequently the number of such series is in inverse ratio to the average value of n , and the number of series and number of Perfects occurring at the head of series are small. Hence in most instances the actual sequence in the case of Imperfects with Waw Cons. is that one such Imperfect follows another; by continuing the process you may ultimately get back without any serious break to an initial Perfect, or as we shall try to show, you may *not*.

The most crucial test of the actual dependence of Imperfects with Waw Cons. on preceding words will naturally be found by examining the beginning of paragraphs, and the same investigation deals with our second point as to the presence or absence of Perfects, and of Imperfects with Waw Cons. in such a position. If the Imperfect with Waw Cons. is always or most often in dependence on something else, and a series of such Imperfects must ultimately rest on a Perfect or its equivalent, then an Imperfect with Waw Cons. will never or only rarely be found at the beginning of a paragraph. As Müller says, it will only be found where a "discourse begun with the simple Perfect is carried on uninterruptedly in the context" and whenever "a new order of thought begins" the Perfect is necessary.

Unfortunately for the purpose of investigation, the process of division into suitable paragraphs is largely a subjective one. An author who has laid down the rule that whenever a new order of thought begins, the Perfect is necessary, will be apt to consider the presence of a Perfect a sufficient indication of a new order of thought. In criticizing such an author one is tempted to err in an opposite direction. However, to avoid this difficulty, I have followed almost exclusively certain recognized divisions, as follows:

1. The Hebrew divisions of the Pentateuch.
2. The chapters.
3. The books of the Bible (O. T.).
4. Kayser's Elohistic sections of the Pentateuch.
5. The paragraphs of the Book of Joshua in the Revised Version.
1. The Hebrew divisions of the Pentateuch.

a. The larger divisions. Of these a large majority begin immediately with an Imperfect and Waw Cons. in all the five books except Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy two of these divisions begin thus, one begins similarly, namely, with a

Perfect and Waw Cons., one has a simple Perfect for its first verb and three others are irrelevant, since they contain exhortation and not narrative.

b. The smaller divisions. Here, too, there is a large majority of those beginning with an Imperfect and Waw Cons. over those in which such an Imperfect is introduced by a tense or phrase. Here also there is so little direct narrative in Deuteronomy that little evidence can be obtained thence.

2. The chapters. Here again, Deuteronomy being for the above reason excluded and Joshua being now included, the result is the same as in 1, only the preponderance of initial Imperfects with the Waw Cons. is greater.

3. The books of the Old Testament (historical, or beginning with a historical section).

Eleven, viz., Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Jonah, Ruth, Esther and 2 Chron. begin with Imperfect and Waw Cons.

Six, viz., Genesis, Exodus, 1 Kings, Job, Daniel and Ezra have an initial Perfect.

Three, viz., Deuteronomy, Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles do not fall into either of the above classes.

The fact that some books now separated were originally combinations of others weakens but does not destroy the evidence given above.

4. Kayser's Elohist sections of the Pentateuch (as given in C. V. Rysell's *De Elohistæ Pentateuchi Sermone*).

I have used these, simply because it seems likely that where a writer selects passages of three or four or more verses and separates them from their context as belonging to a different author, he recognizes some break in the order of thought at the beginning and end, and such sections, as well as the sections left when these are taken away, are a kind of paragraph. In using these paragraphs we are following the independent judgment of a distinguished scholar.

Here again the sections beginning with Imperfects with Waw Cons. are in a great majority.

5. The paragraphs into which the Book of Job is divided in the RV.

The paragraphs in the Revised Version follow so closely the divisions of the Hebrew text that it did not seem worth while to investigate both sets for the same book. For the sake of variety, we have taken the paragraphs of the RV. in this one book with a very similar result to that obtained in all the other cases.

We may also notice that the Imperfect with Waw Cons. is often found after speeches, sometimes long speeches in the oratio recta. Here surely we can scarcely say that the original discourse has proceeded uninterruptedly, or that there is no break in the order of thought. Striking instances of this are: after the last charge of Jacob, Gen. XLIX., 33; after the Song of Moses, Exod. XV., 20; after the last prophecy of Balaam, Num. XXIV., 25; after the Blessing of Moses, Deut. XXXIV., 1.

We may also notice the sections beginning with *אלה תולדות* or similar words. With the exception of those in Num. III., 1 seq., Ruth IV., 18 seq., these are all found in Genesis. The presence of these initial words renders it impossible to have an Imperfect with Waw Cons. at the head of the section. In seven cases we have following this heading or title a Perfect followed by Imperfect and Waw Cons. In another case (Gen. II., 4), we have two verses with no main verb expressed, then an Imperfect in a frequentative sense, and somewhat later an Imperfect with Waw Cons. In five other cases an Imperfect with Waw Cons. follows a clause or clauses in which no main verb is expressed, and in Ruth I., 18 seq. we have a series of Perfects extending over five verses. One would scarcely expect the order of thought to change so constantly in the course of a genealogy.

Thus the result of this investigation is that so far from the Imperfect with Waw Cons. never or rarely occurring at the beginning of a paragraph, this construction occurs at the beginning of paragraphs much oftener than the simple Perfect, and is perhaps the most common beginning.

On the strength of these facts we maintain that there is no sufficient evidence in these six books of any conscious dependence of Imperfect with Waw Cons. on Perfects, other than the dependence always suggested by a Waw. If the writer had felt that grammar demanded a Perfect or its equivalent before an Imperfect with Waw Cons.; this feeling must have had a perceptible influence on the way in which paragraphs begin.

If it is said that in all cases where the Imperfect with Waw Cons. begins a paragraph, the division is so slight as to allow the connection to be carried back over the division to a preceding Perfect, we reply that the division in thought is often as great as it can be in a connected historical work, and that the breaks after which the Perfect is used are no more marked than those after which we have the Imperfect with Waw Cons.

As to the division in thought, we have already pointed out that this Imperfect is found when the narrative style is resumed after a long speech in oratio recta, and again where the scene and subject of a narrative suddenly change, as when the history of Joseph is interrupted by the episode of Tamar.

Then as to the occurrence of the Perfect after slight breaks, let us take the six Toledoth sections which have an initial Perfect; five of these sections, Genesis V., 1 seq.; VI., 9 seq.; XI., 27 seq.; XXXVI., 1 seq.; XXXVII., 2 seq., follow closely some mention of the subject of the Toledoth; in the case of Gen. XXV., 19, the Toledoth of Isaac naturally follow those of Ishmael.

We may also notice that Perfects like Imperfects with Waw Cons. have a tendency to run in series; for instance while the Toledoth Adam, Gen. V., 1, consists of an unbroken series of such Imperfects, in the Toledoth of the sons of Noah the main line of the genealogy is kept up by a series of Perfects. Compare also the genealogy which concludes the Book of Ruth; also in Gen. XIV., 2-5 there

is a series of five Perfects, in Gen. XIX., 23, 24 we have a series of three Perfects, and so again in Gen XXVII, 37.

The Perfects at the beginning of these Toledoth sections perhaps follow as marked a break in the narrative as any Perfects; while those within these sections follow as slight a break as any; and the range between these two extremes is about the same as that between the most and least marked break which is followed by an Imperfect with Waw Cons.

We are now in a position to recur to the case of a long series of Imperfects with Waw Cons. with an initial Perfect. We stated as a deduction from the frequency of such series that the tense most often preceding an Imperfect with Waw Cons. was a similar tense. It would have been scarcely worth while to notice this for its own sake; it might seem too obvious, and yet many less obvious facts are stated in grammars; and the fact that an indefinitely long series of such Imperfects may depend upon a single Perfect is sufficiently novel and striking to be explicitly stated. The ordinary student has forgotten all about the initial Perfect by the time he has had six or seven Imperfects, and if these tenses really are dependent on the initial Perfect, it is well that the student should be reminded of the fact.

But if we decide that the initial Perfect is not to be credited with this long line of Imperfects, then the series is chiefly important as illustrating the principle that the Imperfect with Waw Cons. is the ordinary tense in simple narrative. It not only illustrates the principle, but furnishes new evidence to establish it. We have pointed out that the Perfect of Gen. v., 2 is followed by a series of sixty-five Imperfects with Waw, a series unbroken except by Perfects in dependent sentences and parentheses. According to the ordinary statement of current syntax these can only belong to a discourse uninterruptedly following an initial Perfect or its equivalent, expressed or understood, and here the Perfect is expressed. Apart from the presence in this series of what seems to be an important break at VI., 1, the mind recoils from the supposition that the writer deliberately attached sixty-five Imperfects to one Perfect with the consciousness that the presence of the Perfect at the beginning was a necessary condition to the expression of past time by an Imperfect with Waw thirty verses further on. If it be said that, having once fallen into Imperfects with Waw, the same tense was used till something happened to break the even flow of the narrative, and that the writer used each particular Imperfect with Waw because he knew that the tenses immediately preceding it were the same; then, surely, as a matter of syntax each later Imperfect with Waw is due to the preceding ones, and the fact of such a dependence should have been so stated. But the number of instances in which such Imperfect is found with no very close connection with any previous Perfect or similar Imperfect seems to render even this modified statement of the usual theory unnecessary.

On these grounds we maintain that the two rules given on p. 197 fairly de-

scribe and account for the facts of the language. They need some little explanation and may perhaps be put on a fairly scientific basis. Thus we may lay down the following premises :

1. The ordinary style of Hebrew narrative consists of a series of co-ordinate sentences connected by the conjunction Waw, as against the more complicated constructions and greater variety of conjunctions in other languages.

2. That the verb is usually put first.

3. That instead of using for narrative the ordinary Waw and the Perfect, the Waw pointed as the article is used with the Imperfect.

Thus the ordinary narrative tense will be this Imperfect with Waw. Doubtless the origin of the usage was that which modern theory suggests ; but we maintain that the origin had been forgotten. It now remains to account for cases in which this ordinary tense gives place to the Perfect.

As the connection of the Waw and Imperfect is an essential part of the construction, and the Imperfect is not so used without Waw. It will follow :

1. That the substitution of any other conjunction or of a relative for Waw will render it necessary to use the Perfect, hence the Perfect will be found in dependent, relative, interrogative sentences.

It is, of course, to be understood that this need only apply to the first verb in such a sentence ; a second verb may be connected with this by Waw, and then the Imperfect may follow as usual. As a matter of fact such sentences do not very often contain more than one verb, and when they do, there is some tendency to follow up one Perfect by another, e. g., Gen. vi., 1.

2. Anything which alters the position of the verb will separate it from the Waw and cause it to fall into the Perfect.

Thus *a*, as the negative **אֵין** always precedes the verb, the Perfect is found in negative sentences.

b. Wherever some other word than the verb is placed first for the sake of emphasis, the verb will fall into the Perfect.

3. The oratio recta in its statement, as to past time may use either a narrative or a rhetorical style. In using a narrative style nothing more is intended than to state the facts to the hearer ; when the style becomes rhetorical there is a conscious intention that the statement of facts should move the feelings or the will of the hearer. In the former case the Imperfect with Waw is naturally used, in the latter case the statements are rendered more emphatic by the use of the Perfect. It is chiefly in long speeches that the oratio recta becomes narrative.

Moreover, the principles laid down fully account for the feeling that an Imperfect with Waw is connected with something preceding. Naturally the use of a form, the first member of which is a conjunction, will suggest a connection with something preceding. Again it is natural that a series of Imperfects with Waw should have an appearance of smoothness and regularity ; any unbroken series of

tenses has some such appearance; and in this case the fact that any departure from the usual order of the words renders it impossible to use this Imperfect implies that the presence of this Imperfect indicates an absence of emphasis. Thus also the Hebrew language gains an added emphasis of form from the fact that an unusual order of words must also be accompanied by a less usual tense. But the question as to the use of Perfect or Imperfect with Waw is not one of sequence or connection, but of emphasis; the unbroken series of these Imperfects implies continuity of style rather than of thought. For, while a change of thought may be indicated by a change of style, yet the different parts of a train of thought may be as closely connected as possible, and still their mutual relation and relative importance may give rise to a variety of construction. One might perhaps illustrate the theory that an Imperfect with Waw Cons. implies an initial Perfect by comparing a series of Imperfects to a straight line and a Perfect to a point, then in the nature of things every such series must begin with a Perfect; and the continuity of a narrative will be that of a straight line when Imperfects are used and as broken as a row of isolated points when we have Perfects. According to the view we have tried to maintain, the series of Imperfects may be compared to a gently undulating curve, and the Perfect to a loop; or where a Perfect interrupts a series of Imperfects there would be a loop among the curves. The continuity is the same in each case; there is no necessary sequence, but the change from wave to loop would arrest and detain the attention.

It surely follows that the methods of stating the use of the Imperfect with Waw Cons. are misleading; those of Bickell and Davidson, as being the whole of their statements on this head, would never lead the student to suppose that the facts were as they have been stated above. As to Müller it may be fairer to give a synopsis of his statements on the subject. According to him the Imperfect with Waw Cons. may follow—

1. A Perfect.
2. Any other tense used where a Perfect would have been admissible.
3. Another expression in a present sense instead of a Perfect.
4. Any word whatever, *which it in a manner elucidates*.
5. It may serve as apodosis to a preceding noun placed absolutely.
6. A simple Imperfect under certain conditions.

If it were not that Müller's anxiety to establish a connection in each case leads him to impose limitations on the use under each head, we might say that his statements might gain in clearness and conciseness if they were summed up in a statement in Gesenius, that the Future with Waw Cons. stands only in connection with something preceding. Even then Gesenius' statement is for most cases a truism, since, as we have pointed out, a form introduced by Waw naturally stands mostly in connection with something preceding; and in historical narrative most sentences stand in connection with something preceding. Doubtless,

however, Gesenius intends something more than a truism, as he guards this statement by saying that "If there be any connection with an earlier advent, the Fut. with Waw may even begin a narrative or a section of one." As, however, all narrative has a connection with earlier events, especially in sacred history, unless indeed it be the history of the Creation, this latter statement only removes the truism a stage further back. A single Perfect in the first verse of Genesis would justify Imperfects thence to the end of the Old Testament. In fact such a statement virtually amounts to saying that an Imperfect with Waw Cons. may occur anywhere, and so justifies the position that apart from the Waw there is no conscious dependence of this Imperfect on any previous tense.

In Müller, however, I cannot find any such admission that an Imperfect with Waw may begin a section. We might indeed apply the mathematical interpretation to "any word whatever," and understand it as including "nothing" or "no word at all;" but the limitation "which it in a manner elucidates" shuts us out from this refuge; a series of tenses can scarcely be intended to elucidate "nothing."

Again it is difficult to see how Müller's statements include the numerous instances in which an Imperfect with Waw Cons. resumes the narrative after a long speech in the oratio recta; though as this is virtually beginning a section, it might perhaps be left as another view of the difficulty stated above.

If, however, these gaps in Müller's statement were filled up, we see that they would amount to the elaboration of a truism, and to a virtual admission that the Imperfect with Waw Cons. may be used, whatever precedes. If Müller's statement were intended to show how the usage of this form, at a time when its origin in a dependence on the Perfect was forgotten, might be deduced from this origin, it would seem eminently useful and instructive; but an attempt to explain and describe the actual usage as if the authors of these books were conscious of an origin they seem to have entirely forgotten, is as mischievous and misleading as if we tried to make out that people were influenced in their use of a word by some long forgotten etymology.¹

¹ It may be noticed that this statement is almost identical with that by which Driver introduces his chapter on the "Imperfect with Strong Waw" (ch. VI., p. 83):

"By far the most usual method in which a series of events is narrated in Hebrew consists in connecting each fresh verb with the clause which precedes it by means of the so-called *waw conversivum* (ו) and the Imperfect."

Now it has been shown that this mode of describing the usage of the "Imperfect with Strong Waw" involves an important modification of the statements in such grammars as Bickell, Davidson and Mueller. But the student would understand from the general drift of the book that Driver was thoroughly at one with the current views on syntax and would not be likely to notice a modification unless it were dwelt upon as such. A student, for instance, who read Driver after Davidson would be apt to suppose that the words "clause which precedes" were to be understood in the light of Davidson's statement as to the usage of the Imperfect with Waw Cons.; and that some connected and preceding clause would contain the necessary simple Perfect.

Students would be more likely to profit by Driver's careful accuracy of statement, if the same characteristic prevailed in elementary works.